FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 22, 2016

CONTACT
Lakshmi Sridaran, lakshmi@saalt.org

SAALT applauds today's announcement from the Department of Homeland Security on a final rule that formally ends the deeply flawed, patently ineffective, and openly discriminatory NSEERS program (known as special registration) effective immediately.

As a national South Asian organization that has since its inception been fighting the deeply discriminatory NSEERS program as well as racial and religious profiling writ large, SAALT thanks the Department of Homeland Security, White House, and the Obama Administration for their decision to rescind the regulation behind this dormant program. SAALT in particular salutes the steadfast leadership, organizing, and advocacy of South Asian, Muslim, and Arab individuals directly impacted by the program and grassroots South Asian and Muslim organizations—including members of the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO)—who have been involved in longstanding advocacy against NSEERS. The program was officially discontinued in 2011 when the 25 countries it included were delisted, but its regulatory framework remained dangerously in the books until today.

NSEERS, first created in the immediate aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, required certain non-immigrant male visitors over the age of 16 from 25 Middle Eastern, Arab, and South Asian countries and North Korea to appear at local immigration enforcement offices. Over 80,000 men were forced to register and over 13,000 individuals were forced into deportation proceedings, which did not result in a single terrorism-related conviction. SAALT and South Asian Americans nationwide have experienced firsthand the ways programs such as NSEERS have decimated our trust in law enforcement. Today's announcement begins us on the path to restore some of that trust.

South Asians are the most rapidly-growing demographic group in the United States, and there are an estimated 322 million Muslims nationwide. Even as our communities continue to grow, we are reminded we are all safer when we refuse to racially and religiously profile individuals. As an organization with a deep and longtime commitment to racial justice, civil rights, and civil liberties, SAALT will continue fighting to ensure South Asians and indeed all Americans are able to enjoy and exercise the basic rights and liberties enshrined in our Constitution and concordant with our values as a nation.